

**Norfolk County Registry of Deeds
2009 Annual Report to the Town of Wellesley
William P. O'Donnell, Register
649 High Street, Dedham, Massachusetts**

The Registry of Deeds is the principal office for real property records in Norfolk County. The Registry receives and records hundreds of thousands of documents each year, and is a basic resource for title examiners, mortgage lenders, municipalities, homeowners, and others with a need for land record information. The Registry of Deeds has been a vital component of Norfolk County government since 1793, the year Governor John Hancock signed legislation creating Norfolk County, also known as the County of Presidents - the home or birthplace of John Adams, John Quincy Adams, John F. Kennedy and George H.W. Bush. The Registry operates under the supervision of the elected Register, William P. O'Donnell. In over two hundred years of continuous operation, the Registry has progressed from the days of scribes with quill pens to computers, scanned documents and off-site access. However, in all that time our objectives have remained the same: accuracy, reliability and accessibility for the residents of the twenty eight communities that comprise Norfolk County.

Improved technology and management of records and increased levels of customer service remain areas of major focus for the Registry of Deeds.

Initiatives include:

- A community outreach office hours program that brought Register Bill O'Donnell and the mobile Registry of Deeds to Wellesley on May 23, 2009.
- Free public viewing access for every document including land plans recorded by the Registry since its inception in 1793 via the internet at www.norfolkdeeds.org. The Registry regularly updates and enhances the site to include recent news, trends, press information, and answers to frequently asked questions.
- An ability for those who such as attorneys, title examiners, realtors, lenders, surveyors and civil engineers who establish an account with the Registry to print documents directly from their offices for \$1.00 per page.
- A continuing technology fund investment in computer hardware in the Registry itself to insure that all who want to access the records can do so.
- The expansion of the internet accessible indexing system back to 1947.
- A full service telephone and walk-in customer service center and the addition of closing rooms and tables to encourage the citizens of Norfolk County to feel comfortable in using their Registry.

Wellesley was typical of the other towns in Norfolk County showing decreased real estate activity in fiscal year 2009 recording a total of 536 deeds, 20% fewer than in fiscal year 2008. The average price of a Wellesley real estate sale (greater than \$1,000 - residential and commercial properties combined) stood at almost \$1.1 million falling just 10%, a modest decline when compared to many other Norfolk County communities. The total dollar volume of real estate sales in Wellesley for fiscal year 2009 settled at \$346 million, a 35% decrease from fiscal year 2008. There were 1,726 mortgages recorded in Wellesley in fiscal year 2009 which translates to a healthy increase of 9% over last year. November was the slowest real estate month, but activity heated up in the spring time with June the busiest month accounting for almost 13% of the town's total recordings.



The Norfolk County Advisory Board December meeting at the Registry



Register Bill O'Donnell hosts a community outreach office hours session